

Scoring Comments and Sentence Starters

When should comments be supplied?

- If possible, reviewers should provide comments on each question
- If the score is extremely high
- If the score is extremely low
- If the score given is not the top score in the range

Comments

Common Characteristics of High Quality Comments

- Comments are objective.
- Statements specify exactly which elements of a given criterion the applicant met or did not meet.
- The difference is clear between comments based on fact and those based on professional judgment.
- Comments are analytical rather than descriptive.
- Comments are written in complete sentences and are grammatically correct.
- Comments are limited to information provided in the application and do not imply information is missing, unless the reviewer can specifically reference required information that is not included.
- Comments are courteous, professional, and clearly understandable.

Common Characteristics of Low Quality Comments

- The comments provide too little documentation (such as writing only “yes” or “good”).
- The comments repeat the selection criterion rather than provide an analytical assessment.
- The comments are not clearly related to the selection criteria.
- The narrative comments are inconsistent with assigned scores or recommendations.
- The comments are inaccurate based on the information provided in the application.
- The comments are misspelled or have grammatical errors.
- Statements contain judgments that are outside the scope of responsibility of the reviewer.

Sample Comments Per Application Section

Need for the Services

The applicant provides disaggregated test data which supports a need for the program based on student achievement data. The applicant cites a local study of community needs but does not provide documentation of the study (i.e. publication date, title). The applicant involved representatives from groups as part of a planning committee.

Project Design/Services

(Number) activities have been established by the applicant which serve as the design for implementing the program. Each activity is specific and aligned to the needs of the target population. Specific examples of family services are included.

The objectives outlined by the applicant are directly linked to the needs of the target population. The stated objectives meet the four components of well written objectives. Specific strategies and activities are presented for each program objective.

Management Plan/Budget

Participation among students may be hindered by a lack of transportation as students are expected to provide their own for all elements of the program. Information regarding the connectivity between the regular

instructional day and the after school program is not discussed. The applicant does not discuss how parents will be served within the structure of the program (GED, literacy).

The applicant proposes to serve 1,162 with 12 teachers allowing for a pupil/teacher ratio of 96 students per teacher.

A detailed timeline is included. The applicant plans to provide transportation for participants. Duties and responsibilities of key staff are discussed.

The applicant outlines a management structure that includes financial accounting and ongoing oversight from a central committee of original stakeholders. Contributions of each partner are discussed. Plans have been made to keep the community informed of the program and its success. All associated costs are reasonable and aligned to the goals and objectives of the program. The applicant does not include information regarding support provided from partners.

Transportation will be provided for all activities by the applicant. A timeline has been established that denotes when, what and staff responsibility.

Evaluation

The evaluation section includes the required elements contained in the RFP application and clearly demonstrates the applicant's ability and willingness to meet the evaluation plan criteria.

The evaluation plan is comprehensive, but should address outcomes for all targeted students, not "65% of targeted at-risk participants".

Overall Comments

A very ambitious plan has been outlined by the applicant to provide programming to a target population that has a need for additional support and intervention. The applicant is encouraged to focus on their partnerships relative to providing support to the program. Additionally attention should be given to the sustainability of the program after the funding has ended.

The demographic data provided by the applicant provides support for the project. The applicant may wish to review several key factors in implementing this program (e.g. program design, transportation, instructional strategies relative to the regular school day and transportation for participants).

The community has many poor families existing below the poverty level. An extremely high need for services has been demonstrated in the application.

Sentence Starters

The Sentence Starters below may be useful in forming constructive review comments. Keep in mind that these are not exclusive statements: The purpose is to provide you with a tool to help you succeed in phrasing objective, high-quality comments from your review.

- The applicant *describes* a clear program design that addresses the identified priorities in an effective way as evidenced by...
- The applicant *does not describe* a clear program design that addresses the identified priorities in an effective way as evidenced by...
- Though the applicant provided a general timeline of the program's major goals and activities, it was not clear how the proposed program would implement training and technical assistance activities or provide student leadership opportunities because...

- The proposed three-year plan strategy is *feasible/not feasible* because....
- The proposed plan for how the applicant will engage more students in service is *adequate/inadequate* because...
- The impact the proposed program will have on students is *strong/weak* because...
- The identified community needs are *included/missing*...and have been *substantiated/not substantiated* by community members, official reports, and/or statistics in an *adequate/inadequate* way as evidenced by...
- The proposed strategy and associated activities *address/do not address* the identified community need because...
- The absence of information on... makes it difficult to assess the impact of the program in ...
- The applicant *will/will not strengthen* partnerships with community organizations to increase or improve community-problem solving as evidenced by...
- The applicant explains how the program will increase the capacity of higher education institutions to provide service to local communities in a thorough and convincing way because...
- The program design elements are *aligned/not aligned* because...
- The program (refer to specific area of design in application) *is/is not* likely to be successful because...